UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

# WILLIAM FEUERMAN, JASON LOGAN

## White House Redux

2008 | *Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York*

What if the White House, the ultimate architectural symbol of political power, were to be designed today?

While a picturesque and monumental city, Washington D.C. lacks an urban dynamism that is found in other large metropolises and competitive global cities. Our proposal for the White House Redux competition is not concerned with aesthetics. Rather, we propose that the White House be tall, not to produce a more monumental image for the country, but to intentionally break the building code within the district which has limited its development.

The 1899 Heights of Building Act stipulates that privately built structures be no higher than the Capitol Building or other significant government edifices. It is a common misconception that this law still applies. In 1910 a new law was passed limiting building heights to the width of the street or avenue on which a building fronts, plus 20 feet, thus defining the characteristically wide, open scale of Washington D.C.

By breaking this building code, the White House Redux retroactively reimagines the district as a dynamic and dense urban capital.

On the occasion of the election of the 44th President of the United States of America, Storefront for Art and Architecture, in association with Control Group, issued an international call for designs. Universally recognized as a symbol of political authority, one of America's greatest tourist attractions, and the center of the world's most complex communications system, it is the ultimate architectural embodiment of power.

White House Redux was juried by a panel including Beatriz Colomina, Stefano Boeri, Liz Diller, and Mark Wigley.







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The **White House Redux** provides the opportunity to do more than produce a series of provocative images that represent our contemporary condition, or even a series of witty commentaries or one-liners. Rather, it offers the opportunity to reimagine the development of Washington D.C. as a more dynamic capital city, through the lens of one of its most monumental structures.

Proposition renders

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**WILLIAM FEUERMAN, JASON LOGAN**

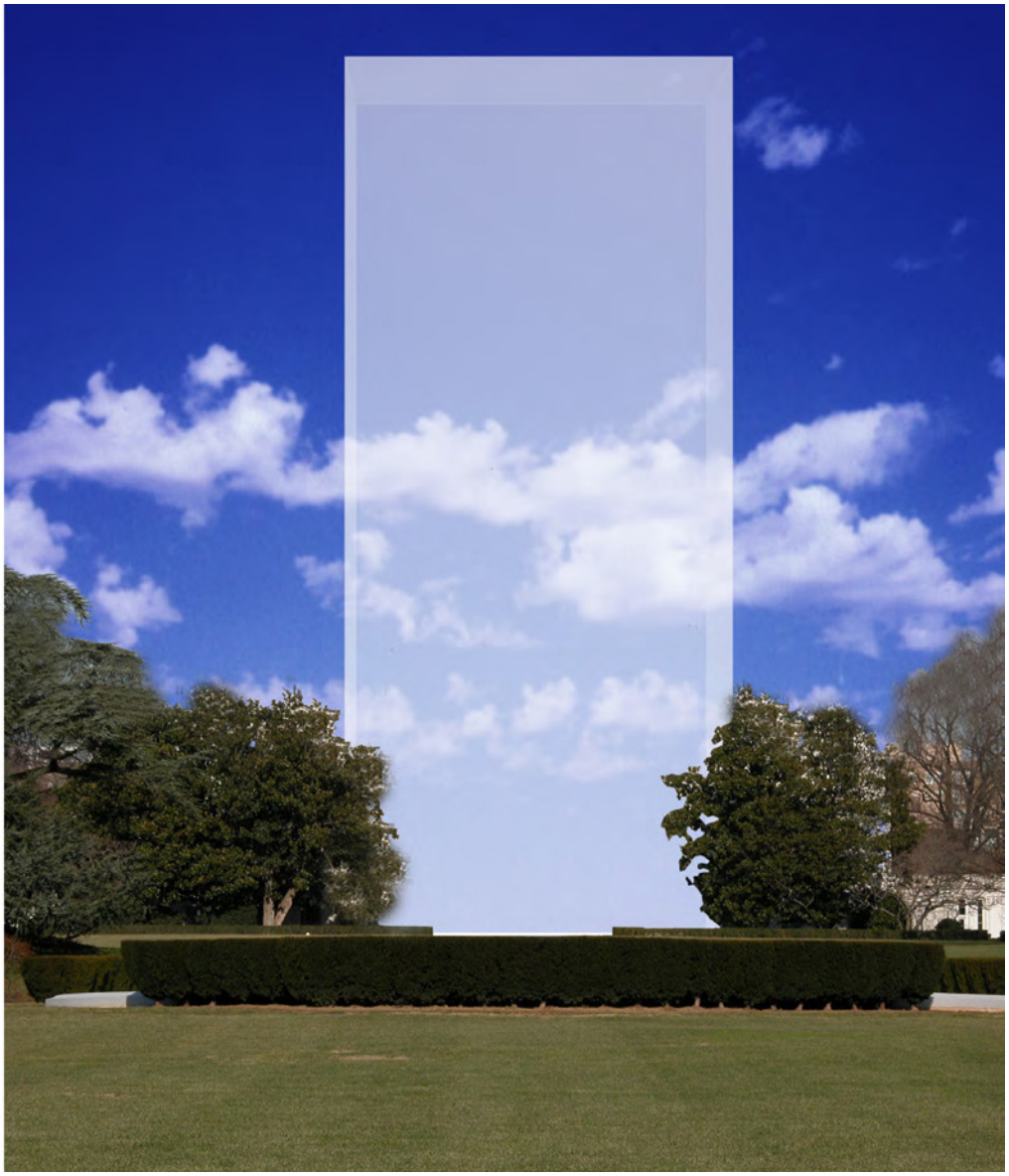
**White House Redux**

Proposition render

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

## WILLIAM FEUERMAN, JASON LOGAN

### White House Redux



Proposition render

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Our environment can have a profound influence on the way we think and live. Therefore, our proposal is not concerned with aesthetics. Rather, we propose that the **White House Redux** be tall, not to produce a more monumental image for the country, but to intentionally break the building code within the district which has limited its development.

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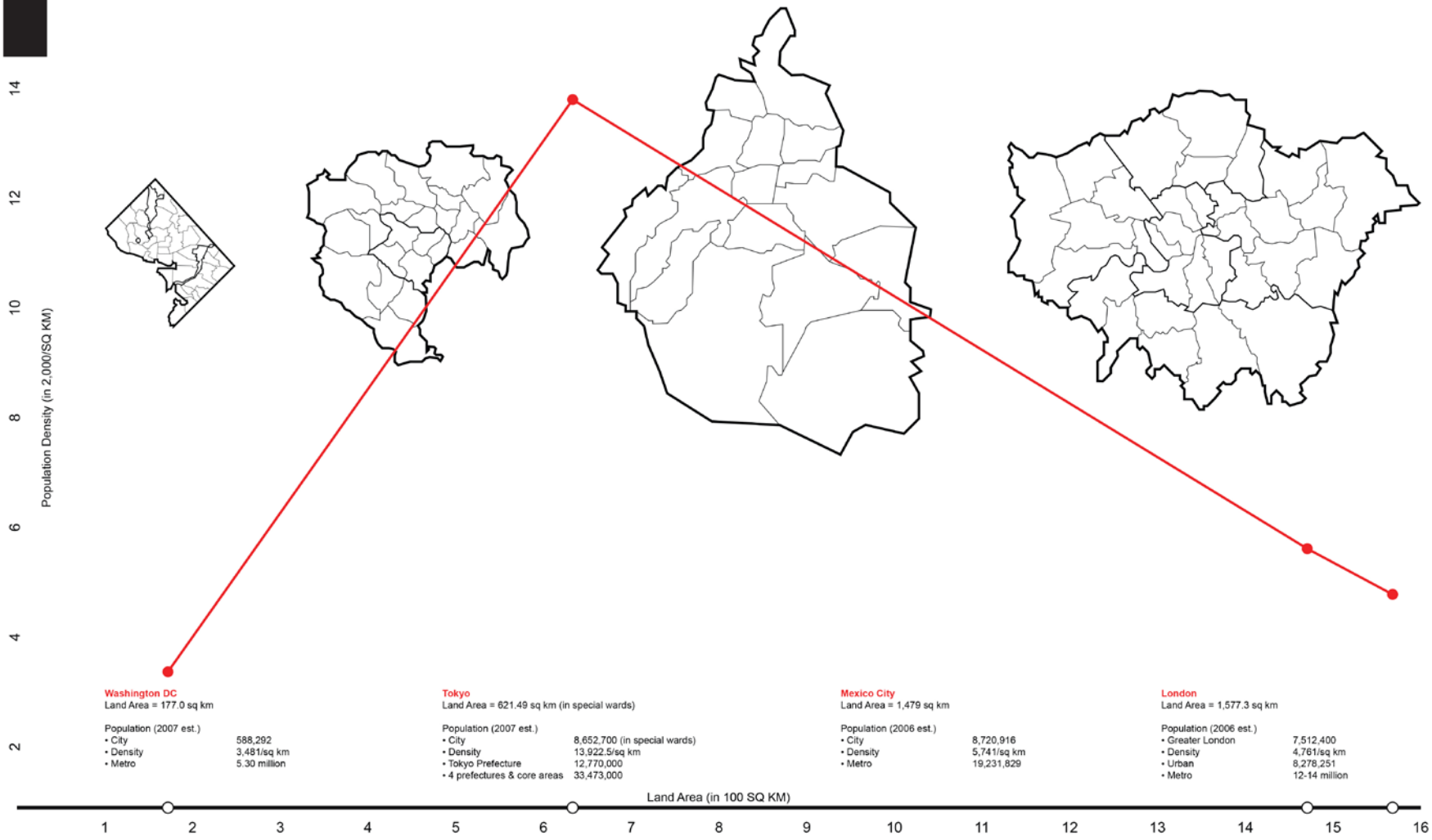
One could argue that, while a picturesque and monumental city, Washington D.C. lacks an urban dynamism that is found in other large metropolises and competitive global cities.



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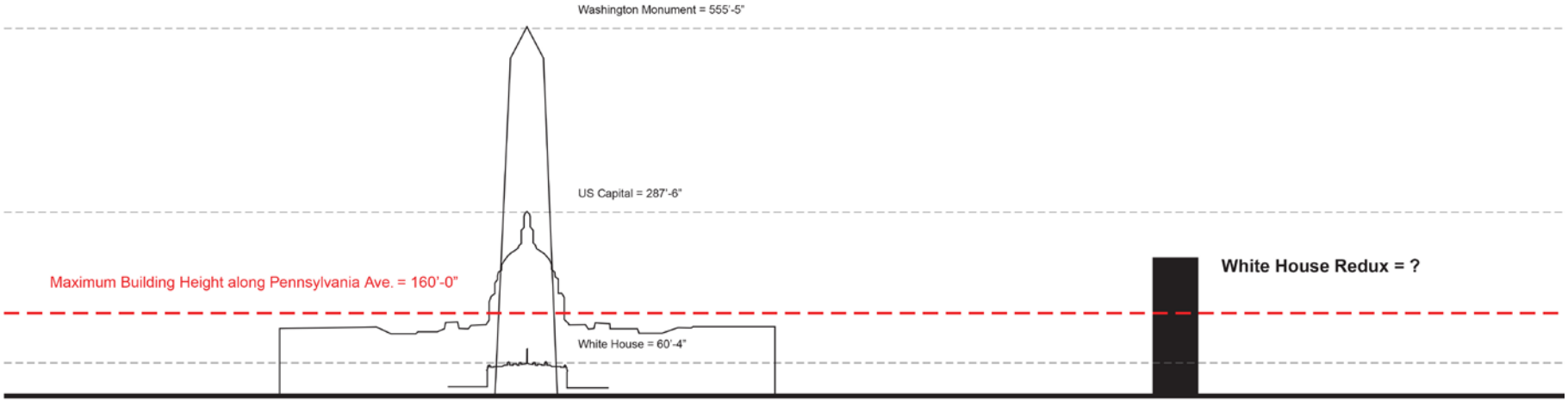
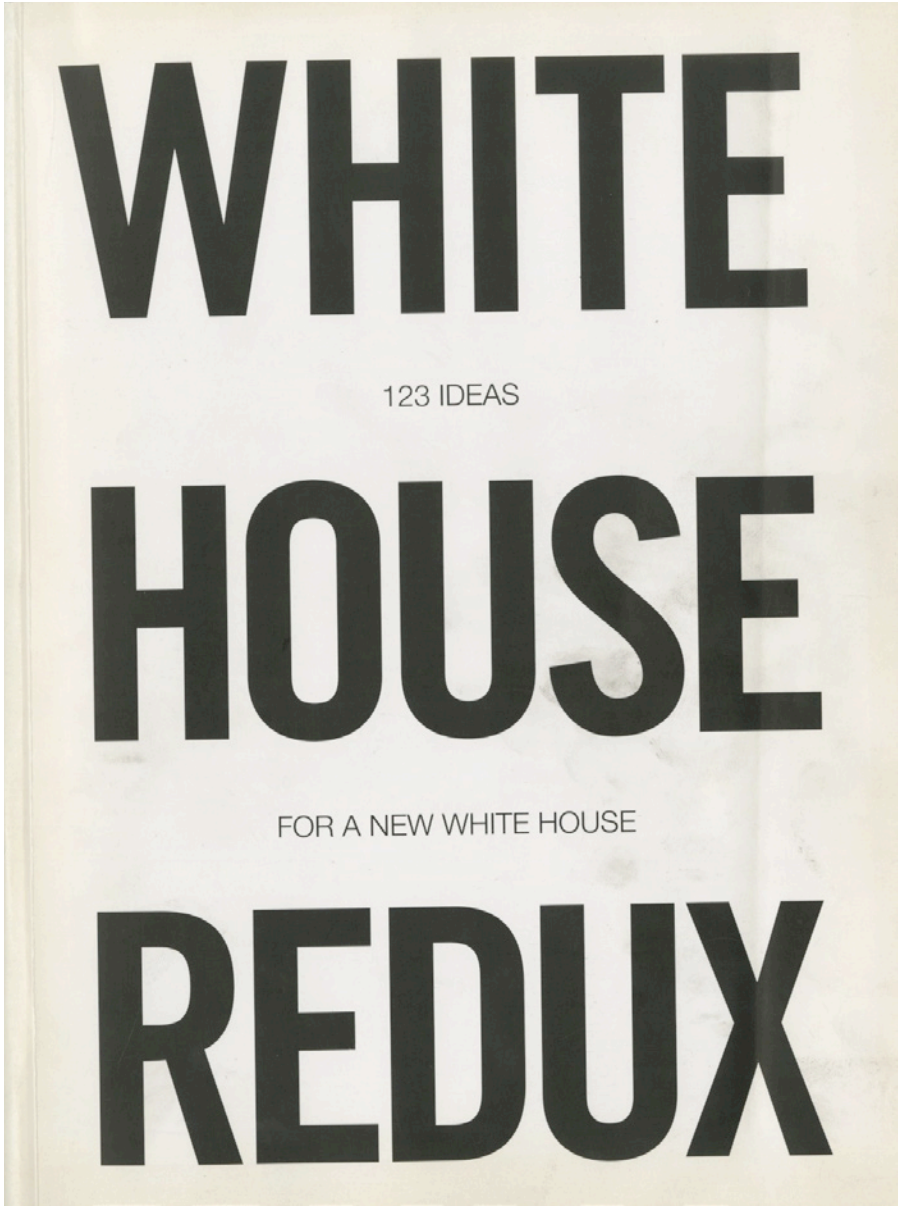
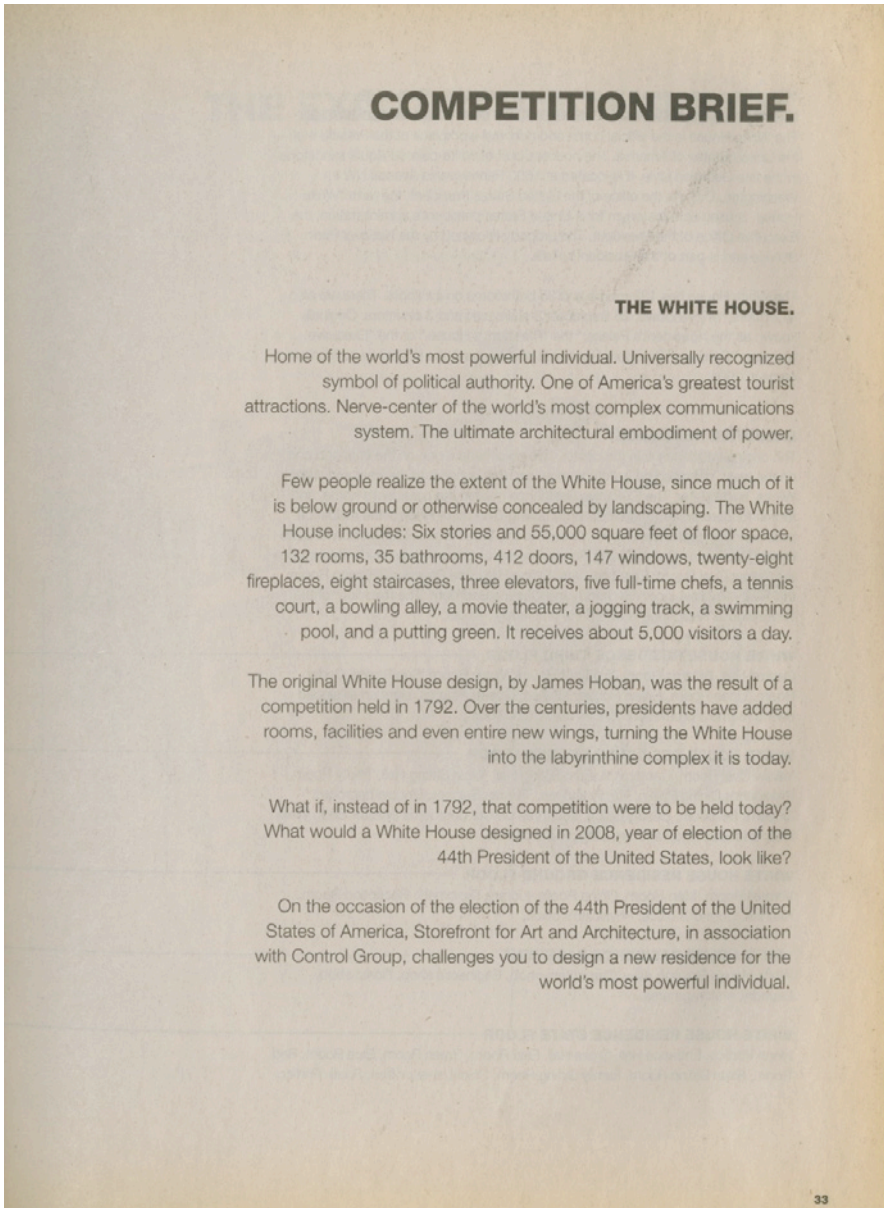




## COMPETITION BRIEF.

### THE WHITE HOUSE.

Home of the world's most powerful individual. Universally recognized symbol of political authority. One of America's greatest tourist attractions. Nerve-center of the world's most complex communications system. The ultimate architectural embodiment of power.

Few people realize the extent of the White House, since much of it is below ground or otherwise concealed by landscaping. The White House includes: Six stories and 55,000 square feet of floor space, 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, 412 doors, 147 windows, twenty-eight fireplaces, eight staircases, three elevators, five full-time chefs, a tennis court, a bowling alley, a movie theater, a jogging track, a swimming pool, and a putting green. It receives about 5,000 visitors a day.

The original White House design, by James Hoban, was the result of a competition held in 1792. Over the centuries, presidents have added rooms, facilities and even entire new wings, turning the White House into the labyrinthine complex it is today.

What if, instead of in 1792, that competition were to be held today? What would a White House designed in 2008, year of election of the 44th President of the United States, look like?

On the occasion of the election of the 44th President of the United States of America, Storefront for Art and Architecture, in association with Control Group, challenges you to design a new residence for the world's most powerful individual.

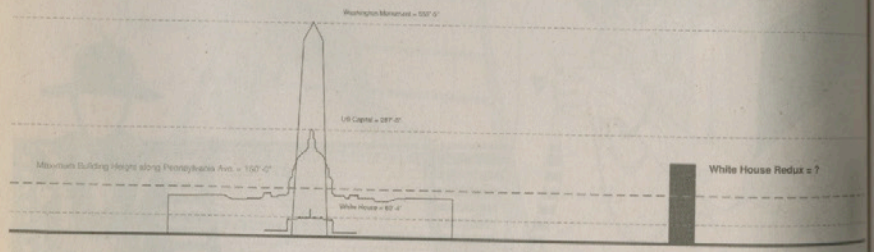
33

WILLIAM FEUERMAN,
JASON LOGAN

**White House Redux**

*White House Redux* publication

In 1894, architect Thomas Franklin Schneider built a controversial 14 story, 160-foot-tall apartment building at 1615 Q St. NW. Congress reacted by passing the 1899 Heights of Building Act which stipulated that privately built structures be no higher than the Capitol Building or other significant government edifices. It is a common misconception that this law still applies; however, in 1910 a new law was passed limiting building heights to the width of the street or avenue on which a building fronts, plus 20 feet. This effectively created a 1:1 ratio of building height to street width, thus defining the characteristically wide, open scale of Washington DC.



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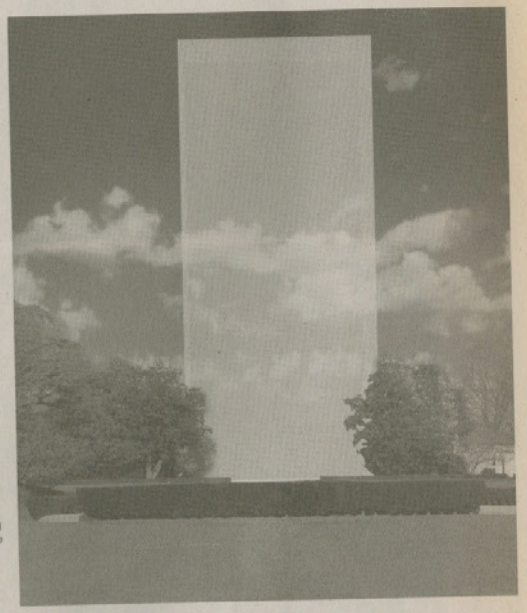

SUBMISSION 135
**WILLIAM FEUERMAN, JASON LOGAN**





**WILLIAM FEUERMAN, JASON LOGAN**

**White House Redux**

*White House Redux* publication

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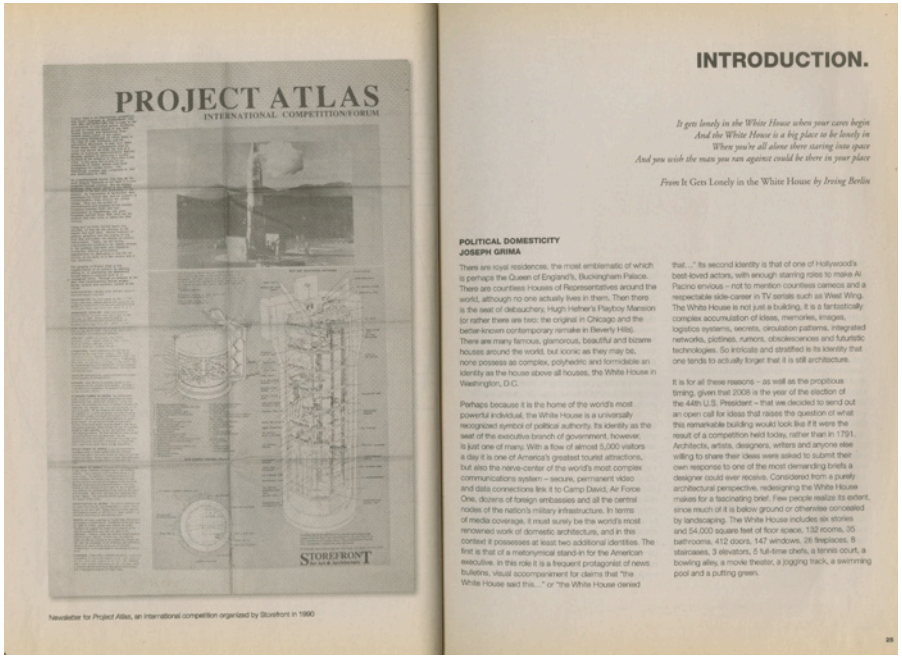
JASON LOGAN

# White House Redux

*White House Redux* publication content


PROJECT ATLAS
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION/FORUM

STOREFRONT

Newsletter for *Project Atlas*, an international competition organized by Storefront in 1990

## INTRODUCTION.

*It gets lonely in the White House when your cares begin*
*And the White House is a big place to be lonely in*
*When you're all alone there staring into space*
*And you wish the man you ran against could be there in your place*

*From* It Gets Lonely in the White House *by Irving Berlin*

**POLITICAL DOMESTICITY**
**JOSEPH GRIMA**

There are royal residences, the most emblematic of which is perhaps the Queen of England's, Buckingham Palace. There are countless Houses of Representatives around the world, although no one actually lives in them. Then there is the seat of debauchery, Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion (or rather there are two: the original in Chicago and the better-known contemporary remake in Beverly Hills). There are many famous, glamorous, beautiful and bizarre houses around the world, but iconic as they may be, none possess as complex, polyhedric and formidable an identity as the house above all houses, the White House in Washington, D.C.

Perhaps because it is the home of the world's most powerful individual, the White House is a universally recognized symbol of political authority. Its identity as the seat of the executive branch of government, however, is just one of many. With a flow of almost 5,000 visitors a day it is one of America's greatest tourist attractions, but also the nerve-center of the world's most complex communications system – secure, permanent video and data connections link it to Camp David, Air Force One, dozens of foreign embassies and all the central nodes of the nation's military infrastructure. In terms of media coverage, it most surely be the world's most renowned work of domestic architecture, and in this context it possesses at least two additional identities. The first is that of a metonymical stand-in for the American executive. In this role it is a frequent protagonist of news bulletins, visual accompaniment for claims that "the White House said this..." or "the White House denied that..." Its second identity is that of one of Hollywood's best-loved actors, with enough starring roles to make Al Pacino envious – not to mention countless cameos and a respectable side-career in TV serials such as West Wing. The White House is not just a building, it is a fantastically complex accumulation of ideas, memories, images, logistics systems, secrets, circulation patterns, integrated networks, plotlines, rumors, obsolescences and futuristic technologies. So intricate and stratified is its identity that one tends to actually forget that it is still architecture.

It is for all these reasons – as well as the propitious timing, given that 2008 is the year of the election of the 44th U.S. President – that we decided to send out an open call for ideas that raises the question of what this remarkable building would look like if it were the result of a competition held today, rather than in 1791. Architects, artists, designers, writers and anyone else willing to share their ideas were asked to submit their own response to one of the most demanding briefs a designer could ever receive. Considered from a purely architectural perspective, redesigning the White House makes for a fascinating brief. Few people realize its extent, since much of it is below ground or otherwise concealed by landscaping. The White House includes six stories and 54,000 square feet of floor space, 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, 412 doors, 147 windows, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases, 3 elevators, 5 full-time chefs, a tennis court, a bowling alley, a movie theater, a jogging track, a swimming pool and a putting green.




Though it might seem little more than an entertaining opportunity for some sketching on napkins, our intentions were deeper. Storefront for Art and Architecture has a long-standing history of calls for ideas and design competitions that have engaged many pressing social, cultural and urban issues, and over the decades a wide range of topics have been investigated. As early as 1982, months after it was founded, the gallery called on artists and architects to engage in an examination of future scenarios for the Gowanus Canal area of Brooklyn (Gowanus Canal Redefined, 1982); this was followed by a call for possible alternatives to the design selected by trustees for the Whitney Museum in Manhattan (Before Whitney, 1985). There have been other subtly humorous – and politically charged – competitions, such as Liberty (1983), which asked participants to redesign one of the most powerful emblems of American freedom, the Statue of Liberty. In 1990, Project Atlas turned into a national debate sparked off by the post-Cold War disarmament process: what to do with the silos of the decommissioned Atlas missiles once the weapons and their deadly payloads had been dismantled and removed? Competitions need not be destined to realization to be useful. They can be a trapdoor to a deeper reading of our surroundings, a way of questioning and re-evaluating the physical and cultural landscape we inhabit. Now and then, they can usefully embolden us to question even that which we hold most sacred.

The brief was intentionally broad, a sort of crystal ball in which each participant could find scope for the expression of his or her interests. As expected, this was reflected in a staggeringly diverse range of ideas. Some tackled the assignment from a strictly disciplinary perspective, others as an opportunity to create something beautiful, seductive and befitting of a President, others still as an chance to make a political statement. Some submissions are ideological, others are simply surreal. For several participants, redesigning the White House became a corollary to an even more complex challenge: redesigning the democratic process and the relationship between American citizens and political power.

Of the almost 500 proposals received from 42 countries around the world, no two were the same, although there were a few common themes. One was to locate the president's residence on a tower high above Washington, the most ambitious of which perched it on the summit of a slender column at an elevation of one kilometer above sea level. Almost twenty suggested burying the new building underground, and at least nine others reproposed an idea contained in the title of a '90s track by rapper George Clinton, Paint The White House Black, a satirical masterpiece featuring hip-hop luminaries Ice Cube and Dr. Dre. One obviously hopes that it will never come to pass that the White House should need to be replaced, but that need not prevent us from trying to imagine what hidden potential it conceals.

**A BRIEF HISTORY**

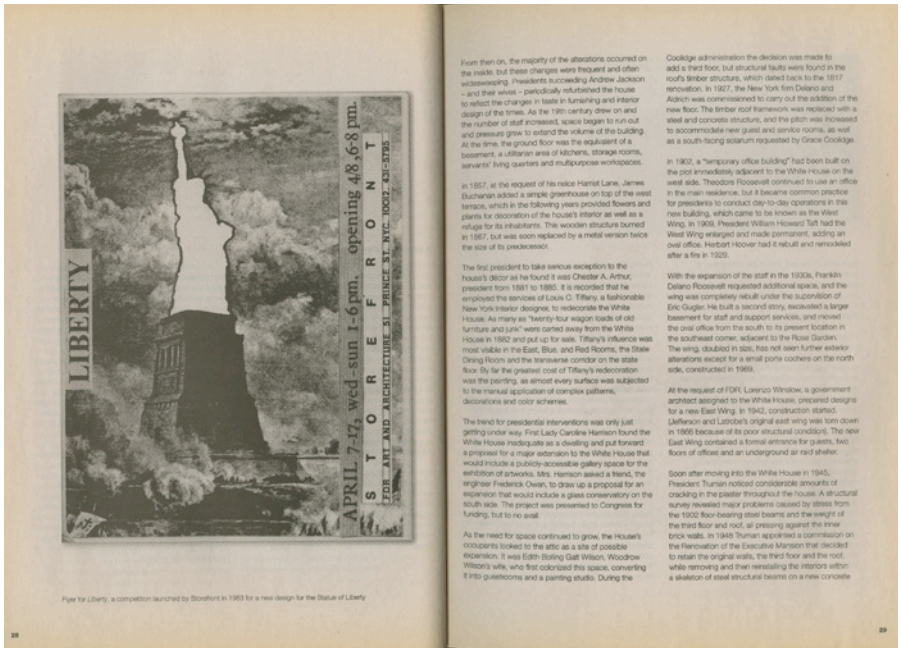
As the intended focal point of his 1791 masterplan for the city of Washington D.C., the Presidential Palace, as it was known at the time, was of special interest to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the French architect and planner tasked with the design of the new capital. Had his prescriptions been followed, the residence would have been five times the size of the eventual structure; tensions erupted over this as well as other matters of scale, and L'Enfant was dismissed the same year the cornerstone was laid. The White House is the product of several competitions, for which there was a prize of $500 and a single juror: the nation's first President, George Washington, who traveled to the site on July 16, 1792, to review the results. Nine proposals were received (one of which was submitted anonymously by George Washington). Washington's decision is recorded as having been made swiftly, and the commission was assigned to James Hoban, an architect of Irish origin. A separate competition was launched for the design of Capitol Hill.

Born in Kilkenny, Ireland, about 1758, Hoban immigrated to the United States and worked as an architect and builder in Philadelphia (PA) and Charleston (SC). Having won the competition for the President's residence in 1792, he moved to the capital where he spent the rest of his life and became a prominent figure in the building trades. He served as a member of the City Council from 1802-1831, and died in 1831.

When hostilities with Great Britain broke out in 1812, the president's residence became a prime symbolic target. On August 24, troops entered the city; the palace designed by Hoban was one of many buildings to be torched in an attempt to raze the new nation's capitol to the ground. (Legend has it, however, that the soldiers took the time to eat the president's dinner before setting fire to the building.) Only the outer walls were left standing.

Resisting calls to transfer the capital elsewhere following the attack, President Madison convinced Congress to rebuild the public buildings damaged in the attack. James Hoban returned to work on the reconstruction of the President's palace. The weakened walls were dismantled to the basement level on the north, east and west sides. In 1817, President James Monroe became the first to inhabit the renovated house.

In his original design dating back to 1792, James Hoban had proposed a south porch with doors opening to it from the three south parlors, but it was never built. In 1817, a proposal was drawn up for south and north porticoes. These were not constructed until 1824 and 1829 respectively, again under the supervision of James Hoban. Only after Andrew Jackson's election in 1828 did Congress appropriate the funds to build the north portico, which covered the driveway to serve as a porte cochere. The central portion of the White House as we know it today was finally complete.




Flyer for *Liberty*, a competition launched by Storefront in 1983 for a new design for the Statue of Liberty



From then on, the majority of the alterations occurred on the inside, but these changes were frequent and often widespreading. Presidents succeeding Andrew Jackson – and their wives – periodically refurbished the house to reflect the changes in taste in furnishing and interior design of the times. As the 19th century drew on and the number of staff increased, space began to run out and pressure grew to extend the volume of the building. At the time, the ground floor was the equivalent of a basement, a utilitarian area of kitchens, storage rooms, servants' living quarters and multipurpose workspaces.

In 1867, at the request of his neice Harriet Lane, James Buchanan added a simple greenhouse on top of the west terrace, which in the following years provided flowers and plants for decoration of the house's interior as well as a refuge for its inhabitants. This wooden structure burned in 1867, but was soon replaced by a metal version twice the size of its predecessor.

The first president to take serious exception to the house's décor as he found it was Chester A. Arthur, president from 1881 to 1885. It is recorded that he employed the services of Louis C. Tiffany, a fashionable New York interior designer, to redecorate the White House. As many as "twenty-four wagon loads of old furniture and junk" were carted away from the White House in 1882 and put up for sale. Tiffany's influence was most visible in the East, Blue, and Red Rooms, the State Dining Room and the transverse corridor on the state floor. By far the greatest cost of Tiffany's redecoration was the painting, as almost every surface was subjected to the manual application of complex patterns, decorations and color schemes.

The trend for presidential interventions was only just getting under way. First Lady Caroline Harrison found the White House inadequate as a dwelling and put forward a proposal for a major extension to the White House that would include a publicly-accessible gallery space for the exhibition of artworks. Mrs. Harrison asked a friend, the engineer Frederick Owen, to draw up a proposal for an expansion that would include a glass conservatory on the south side. The project was presented to Congress for funding, but to no avail.

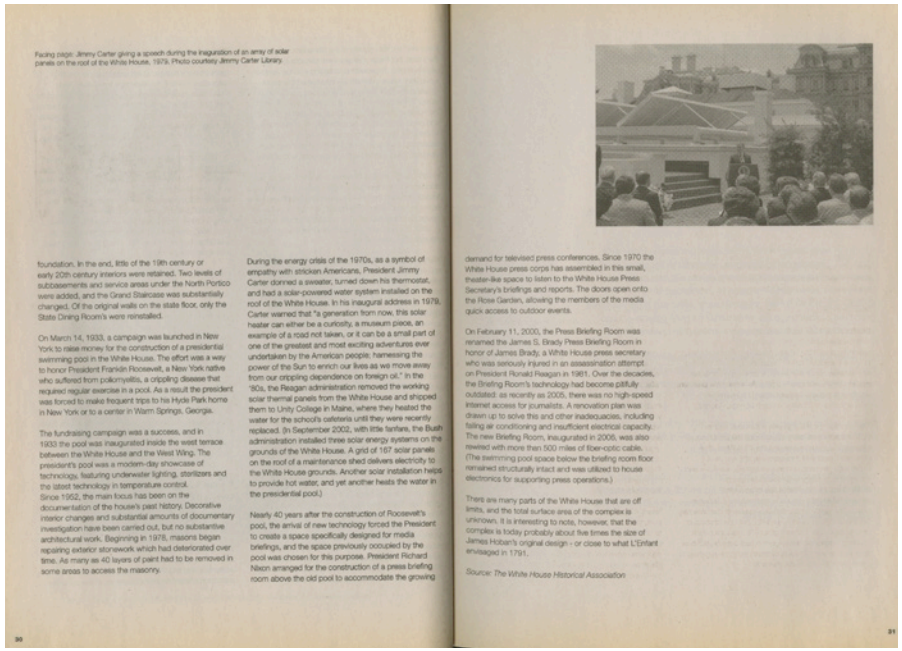
As the need for space continued to grow, the House's occupants looked to the attic as a site of possible expansion. It was Edith Boling Galt Wilson, Woodrow Wilson's wife, who first colonized this space, converting it into guestrooms and a painting studio. During the Coolidge administration the decision was made to add a third floor, but structural faults were found in the roof's timber structure, which dated back to the 1817 renovation. In 1927, the New York firm Delano and Aldrich was commissioned to carry out the addition of the new floor. The timber roof framework was replaced with a steel and concrete structure, and the pitch was increased to accommodate new guest and service rooms, as well as a south-facing solarium requested by Grace Coolidge.

In 1902, a "temporary office building" had been built on the plot immediately adjacent to the White House on the west side. Theodore Roosevelt continued to use an office in the main residence, but it became common practice for presidents to conduct day-to-day operations in this new building, which came to be known as the West Wing. In 1909, President William Howard Taft had the West Wing enlarged and made permanent, adding an oval office. Herbert Hoover had it rebuilt and remodeled after a fire in 1929.

With the expansion of the staff in the 1930s, Franklin Delano Roosevelt requested additional space, and the wing was completely rebuilt under the supervision of Eric Gugler. He built a second story, excavated a larger basement for staff and support services, and moved the oval office from the south to its present location in the southeast corner, adjacent to the Rose Garden. The wing, doubled in size, has not seen further exterior alterations except for a small porte cochere on the north side, constructed in 1969.

At the request of FDR, Lorenzo Winslow, a government architect assigned to the White House, prepared designs for a new East Wing. In 1942, construction started. (Jefferson and Latrobe's original east wing was torn down in 1866 because of its poor structural condition). The new East Wing contained a formal entrance for guests, two floors of offices and an underground air raid shelter.

Soon after moving into the White House in 1945, President Truman noticed considerable amounts of cracking in the plaster throughout the house. A structural survey revealed major problems caused by stress from the 1902 floor-bearing steel beams and the weight of the third floor and roof, all pressing against the inner brick walls. In 1948 Truman appointed a commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion that decided to retain the original walls, the third floor and the roof, while removing and then reinstalling the interiors within a skeleton of steel structural beams on a new concrete


Facing page: Jimmy Carter giving a speech during the inagurstion of an array of solar panels on the roof of the White House, 1979. Photo courtesy Jimmy Carter Library.

foundation. In the end, little of the 19th century or early 20th century interiors were retained. Two levels of subbasements and service areas under the North Portico were added, and the Grand Staircase was substantially changed. Of the original walls on the state floor, only the State Dining Room's were reinstalled.

On March 14, 1933, a campaign was launched in New York to raise money for the construction of a presidential swimming pool in the White House. The effort was a way to honor President Franklin Roosevelt, a New York native who suffered from poliomyelitis, a crippling disease that required regular exercise in a pool. As a result the president was forced to make frequent trips to his Hyde Park home in New York or to a center in Warm Springs, Georgia.

The fundraising campaign was a success, and in 1933 the pool was inaugurated inside the west terrace between the White House and the West Wing. The president's pool was a modern-day showcase of technology, featuring underwater lighting, sterilizers and the latest technology in temperature control. Since 1952, the main focus has been on the documentation of the house's past history. Decorative interior changes and substantial amounts of documentary investigation have been carried out, but no substantive architectural work. Beginning in 1978, masons began repairing exterior stonework which had deteriorated over time. As many as 40 layers of paint had to be removed in some areas to access the masonry.

During the energy crisis of the 1970s, as a symbol of empathy with stricken Americans, President Jimmy Carter donned a sweater, turned down his thermostat, and had a solar-powered water system installed on the roof of the White House. In his inaugural address in 1979, Carter warned that "a generation from now, this solar heater can either be a curiosity, a museum piece, an example of a road not taken, or it can be a small part of one of the greatest and most exciting adventures ever undertaken by the American people: harnessing the power of the Sun to enrich our lives as we move away from our crippling dependence on foreign oil." In the '80s, the Reagan administration removed the working solar thermal panels from the White House and shipped them to Unity College in Maine, where they heated the water for the school's cafeteria until they were recently replaced. (In September 2002, with little fanfare, the Bush administration installed three solar energy systems on the grounds of the White House. A grid of 167 solar panels on the roof of a maintenance shed delivers electricity to the White House grounds. Another solar installation helps to provide hot water, and yet another heats the water in the presidential pool.)

Nearly 40 years after the construction of Roosevelt's pool, the arrival of new technology forced the President to create a space specifically designed for media briefings, and the space previously occupied by the pool was chosen for this purpose. President Richard Nixon arranged for the construction of a press briefing room above the old pool to accommodate the growing



demand for televised press conferences. Since 1970 the White House press corps has assembled in this small, theater-like space to listen to the White House Press Secretary's briefings and reports. The doors open onto the Rose Garden, allowing the members of the media quick access to outdoor events.

On February 11, 2000, the Press Briefing Room was renamed the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room in honor of James Brady, a White House press secretary who was seriously injured in an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in 1981. Over the decades, the Briefing Room's technology had become pitifully outdated: as recently as 2005, there was no high-speed internet access for journalists. A renovation plan was drawn up to solve this and other inadequacies, including failing air conditioning and insufficient electrical capacity. The new Briefing Room, inaugurated in 2006, was also rewired with more than 500 miles of fiber-optic cable. (The swimming pool space below the briefing room floor remained structurally intact and was utilized to house electronics for supporting press operations.)

There are many parts of the White House that are off limits, and the total surface area of the complex is unknown. It is interesting to note, however, that the complex is today probably about five times the size of James Hoban's original design – or close to what L'Enfant envisaged in 1791.

*Source: The White House Historical Association*

**WILLIAM FEUERMAN, JASON LOGAN**

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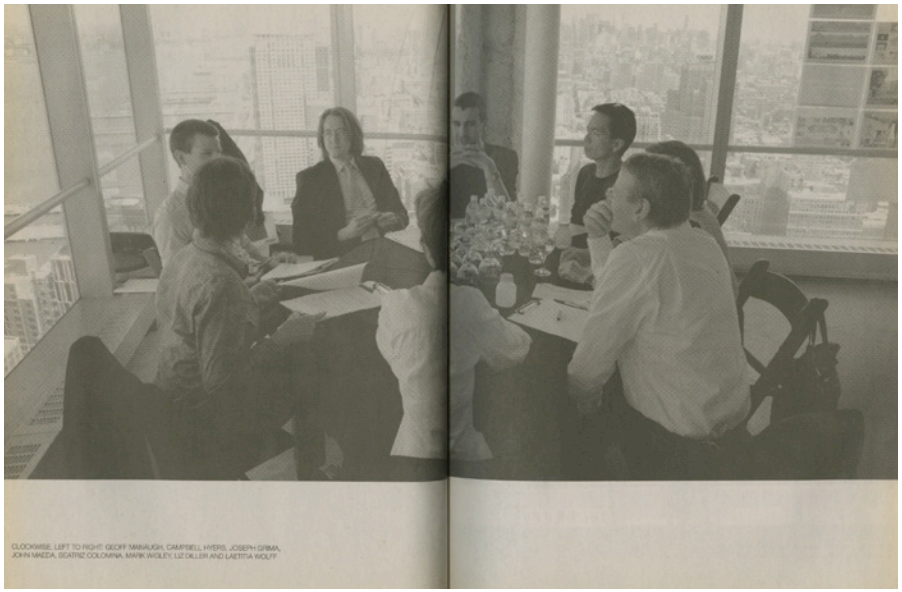

CLOCKWISE, LEFT TO RIGHT: GEOFF MANAUGH, CAMPBELL MYERS, JOSEPH GRIMA, JOHN MAEDA, BEATRIZ COLOMINA, MARK WIGLEY, LIZ DILLER AND LAETITIA WOLFF

Competion panel in judging process

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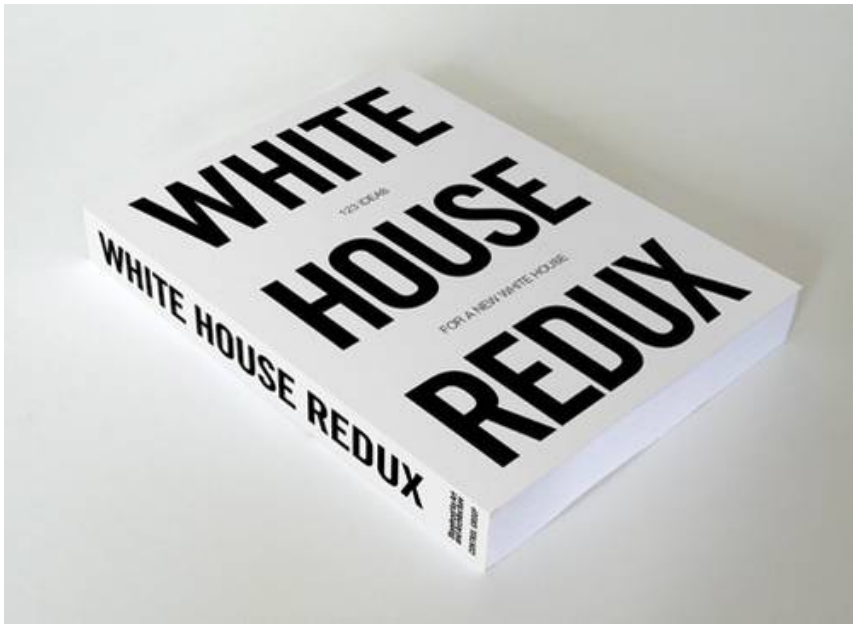
New York, NY 10012
Tel. 212.431.5795
info@storefrontnews.org

**Hours**
Tues. – Sat. 11:00AM – 6:00PM
Closed Sunday and Monday



# White House Redux - The Book




**WHITE HOUSE REDUX - THE BOOK**
Storefront for Art and Architecture
2008
$65.00

ADD TO CART

**PREVIEW**


2009, Storefront for Art and Architecture
$65.00

With almost 500 submissions from 42 countries around the world, White House Redux, a competition launched by Storefront for Art and Architecture and Control Group in January 2008, became one of the most talked-about architecture competitions of the year. The brief was simple: what would the residence of the most powerful individual in the world, the White House in Washington, D.C., look like if it were designed today?

Published to coincide with the opening of an exhibition of the competition's results at Storefront for Art and Architecture, White House Redux contains a compendium of documentation related to the competition and an overview of the results. It includes essays by Joseph Grima (Storefront) and Geoff Manaugh (BLDGBLOG), a history of the existing White House and 123 selected projects as well as the four winning submissions. A jury assessed the submissions in the spectacular setting of the 45th floor of the World Trade Center Tower 7, a process documented in the book's 30-page photo essay by Marty Hyers.

Soft cover: 734 pages
7.8" x10.5"

*All Storefront Books sales are final and non-refundable.*





Supporting evidence

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White House Redux - The Book

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